

Herrick Lake Forest Preserve, Wheaton

The 887-acre Herrick Lake Forest Preserve is in south Wheaton, with entrances and parking off of Butterfield Rd., just east of Herrick Rd./Weisbrook Rd., and off of Herrick Rd. just south of Butterfield Rd. (Rt. 56). It borders Danada Forest Preserve at its east end.

Wide crushed limestone paths are open for walking, bicycling, horseback riding, and cross-country skiing. In addition to Danada Forest Preserve to the east, limestone paths connect Herrick Lake with the St. James Farm, Blackwell/McKee Marsh, and Warrenville Grove Forest Preserves, and with the Illinois Prairie Path. Expect plenty of bike traffic!

Habitat type/site overview

While named for the 22-acre lake, most of the preserve is a combination of mature forest, scrubland, and fields, with some pothole ponds and marshes. Herrick Lake itself is evident from both entrances



and is surrounded by an easy-to-walk and well-travelled path. Trails in the preserve's interior, away from the lake, are quieter and often better for birding, but migrants and local birds are plentiful around the lake as well and parking lot areas, making Herrick Lake a good choice for quick access to birding.

Topography

There are about 7 miles of mostly crushed limestone paths traversing the preserve. The main trails can be described as a chain of four interlinking loops starting with the lake trail, continuing with three adjoining loops that start at the lake's south end, and end at the one-way portion of the Danada-Herrick Lake Regional Trail leading to Danada Forest Preserve. The multi-circular design makes it easy to adjust the length of your hike to the time you have available.

A "new" section of the Forest Preserve on the west side of Herrick Rd. bordering Butterfield Rd. has no paths and is largely unexplored so far. The Lake Trail can be fairly crowded at times, but is an excellent spot to bird quickly. Trees along the farthest west outcropping of the lake, between the west parking lot and the lake path, and both sides of the footbridge are good for warblers, thrushes, and other migrants, and are often thick with Baltimore Orioles in season.



From the east side of the Butterfield Rd. parking lot, a dirt path leads to some ponds running along Butterfield Rd.— these are especially worth checking out during migration. Barn Swallows have nested under the south covered shelter. A small footbridge just west of this shelter separates the main lake

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from a small marsh area that is worth checking. The lake itself hosts mainly Mallards and Canada Geese, though occasionally you can see migrating geese, shorebirds, gulls and terns, herons and egrets.

For an enlarged view of this map, go to www.dupageforest.org.

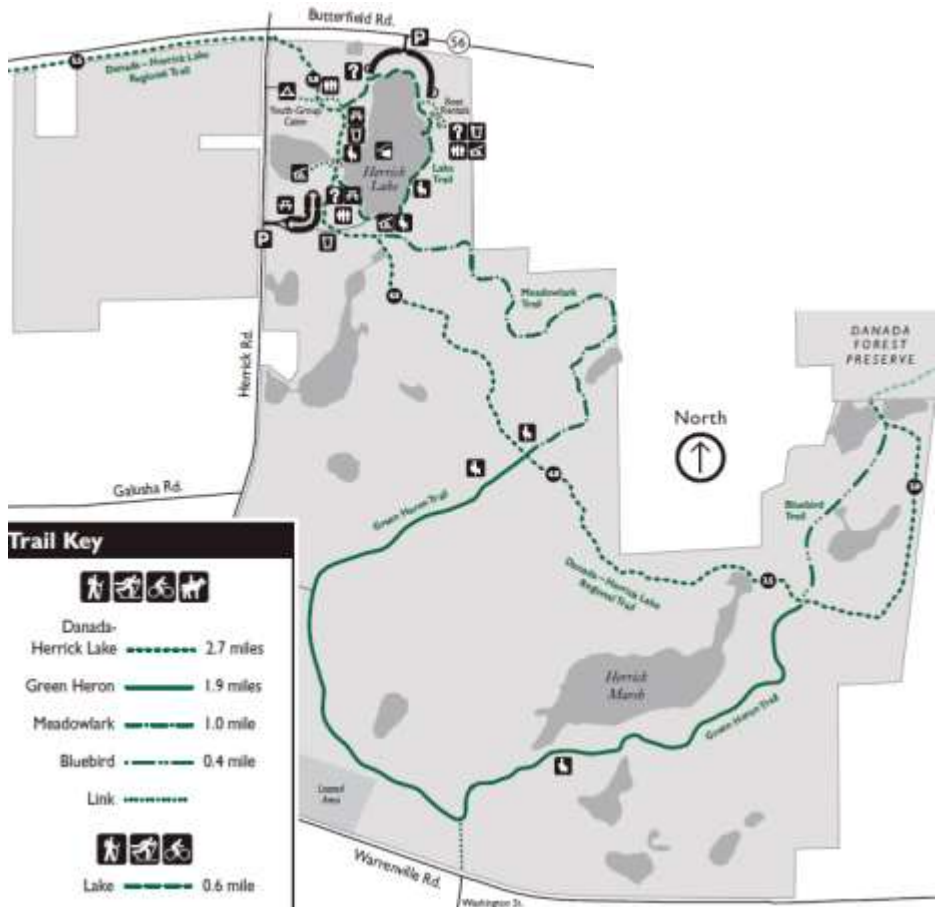
The second loop (the Meadowlark Trail/Danada-Herrick Lake Regional Trail) begins just south of the south shelter. Most of this loop is forested, with a field at the far east end. The Meadowlark (northeast) section borders Arrowhead Golf Course.

Some dirt/grass paths heading west off of the Danada-Herrick Lake Regional Trail (southwest) section are worth exploring. The first (and longest) of these is near the start of the trail. The Forest Preserve staff have cleaned out some trees near this path, which is visible heading southwest. This one-way path goes through several habitats and includes a lake along Herrick Road which is on private property but which can be viewed from the path.

Look here for Wood Ducks, Great Blue and Green Herons, Great Egrets, and possibly Black-crowned Night-herons. Warblers, vireos, Scarlet Tanagers, Indigo Buntings, Rufous-sided Towhees, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, and several hawk species among other birds are easy to find.

Heading north of the trail at this spot leads up an incline (good for Trillium in spring) to a small pond that is worth checking out.

Returning to the Regional trail, look for the usual wood and scrub birds; check the tops of tall dead trees on the west side of the path for Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. Two Pileated Woodpeckers have been active along the Regional segment near the field opening.



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Shortly after you enter the field there is a map and a bench; the next loop (Green Heron Trail/Danada-Herrick Lake Regional Trail) begins here.

The Green Heron Trail/Danada-Herrick Lake Regional Trail makes up the third loop.

Near the start of both sections of the loop check trees for warblers, kinglets and thrushes, and flycatchers during migration. Informal trails lead off of both trails, mostly into the wooded (and often very wet) interior. Although sometimes under water and often difficult to find, these trails have yielded excellent birds in the past.

The shorter Regional Trail (north) is mostly woods on both sides. Just before it enters an open field there is a stand of old oaks; if you head south from here you have a good off-trail view of Herrick Marsh – listen here for Sora. The oaks can shelter warblers, Scarlet Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Indigo Buntings, Great Crested Flycatchers, Wood Thrushes, and woodpeckers. Continuing west on the Regional Trail takes you to a stream leading to the main marsh, and then on to the next crossroads.

The longer Green Heron Trail passes south and east through mostly scrub fields, then northeast through woods and past a large marsh on the south edge and a woodlot on the north edge before joining the Regional Trail at the crossroads.

In the scrubby fields you can see many common field birds; look also for the occasional cuckoo (both types) and Bell's or White-eyed Vireo, and possibly even Northern Bobwhite. This section was once thick with Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlarks, and even Henslow's Sparrows, but they have mostly disappeared as the habitat changed.

Near a short trail leading to Herrick Road is an overgrown grass trail leading east to what must have been a dwelling at one time. This path has always been particularly good for field birds (and ticks) and is worth exploring if you have time.

There are several ponds at the southwest edge of this section, but although they look interesting and are loud with frog calls in spring and early summer, they're difficult to get to and have not yielded anything unexpected.



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From here the habitat around the Green Heron Trail changes again to become more wooded as it parallels Warrenville Rd. Turning north and east near a spur to Washington St. you enter a more wooded section that leads to a large marsh. Check the marsh area for Sedge and Marsh Wrens, Sora, Orchard Orioles, Loggerhead Shrikes, and interesting ducks and shorebirds. The Forest Preserve controls the flow of water into the marsh. At one time a lake spread over what is now marsh, but the intent has been to decrease the water and let marsh plants grow. Part-way along this section is a bench; behind this is a dirt path heading south through a woodlot that has been good for warblers in the past. Depending on the weather there may be some interesting ponds here.



Continuing from the marsh the path bends north for a short period before it meets the next crossroads. This section is fairly good for warblers, sparrows, and thrushes.

The fourth and last loop is the short Bluebird Trail/Regional Trail continuation. The Regional (east and north) section is mostly scrub woods that continues to be decent habitat for warblers, sparrows, and common field and scrub birds. The Bluebird Trail section is mostly field and includes birds such as Henslow's Sparrows, Eastern Meadowlarks, Bobolinks, Tree Swallows, Eastern Bluebirds.



At the next crossroads the Danada-Herrick Lake Regional Trail continues as a one-way path to the Danada Forest Preserve on both sides of Naperville Rd. Near the crossroads are some ponds on both sides of the path – one is open and marshy and the other is surrounded by trees. Look (and listen) here for birds like Pied-billed Grebe, Sora, Blue- and Green-winged Teal, shorebirds, and waders, as well as warblers, vireos, and other migrants nearby. A rookery (mostly Great Blue Herons and Double-crested Cormorants) has been seen near this intersection.

Best time to go

There is really no bad time to visit Herrick Lake. If you find yourself nearby with little time to spend, you can be successful in the various habitats close to both parking lots.

Amenities

Picnic tables/benches and three [reservable covered picnic shelters](#) are available near both entrances; there are plenty of places to spread blankets for picnicking as well. There are outhouses in two spots on the west side of the lake and flush toilets on the east side. Grills are allowed, but ground fires are not.

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There are containers for trash, recycle, and hot charcoal. Water fountains and spigots can be found on the east side of the lake, along with snack sales (in season), and there is a water pump near the southwest parking lot off of Herrick Rd. [Rowboats and canoes can be rented](#) from the east side of the lake during May through September. [Fishing](#) (Largemouth Bass, Channel and Flathead Catfish, Black Bullhead, Crappie, Sunfish and Carp) is allowed with a valid Illinois fishing license. Dogs are allowed on leash.

Contributors

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